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ABSTRACT

This study expands the scope of an earlier review by examining a larger database of self concept studies in bilingual education and by relating the findings in bilingual education to general studies of the self concept in the educational literature. The traditional view of self concept as an intervening variable is found to be reflected in the compensatory education literature, and in literature on self concept and academic achievement. Three basic models have been suggested as alternatives to the traditional one. With regard to bilingual education, two types of studies were found: (1) impact studies that examine the effects of bilingual programs on the development of the self concept, and (2) comparative studies that tested the hypothesis that bilingual programs are more successful than monolingual programs in enhancing the student's self image. A total of 40 studies addressing these two questions are reviewed. While the literature supports the hypothesis that bilingual education aids self concept development, the position is taken that the traditional paradigm may need to be replaced. It is suggested that research should concentrate on the process of self concept formation in successful bilingual programs and that the view be accepted that self concept is something that happens in school, not prior to school. (AMH)

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SELF CONCEPT STUDIES IN BILINGUAL EDUCATION

A REVIEW AND CRITIQUE

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UNIVERSITY OF THE PACIFIC

Feb 1983

SELF CONCEPT STUDIES IN BILINGUAL EDUCATION
A REVIEW AND CRITIQUE

Affective factors are generally acknowledged to play an important role in bilingual education. Bilingual program descriptions typically contain statements of affective goals and objectives, and arguments in support of bilingual instruction are often based, at least in part, on affective considerations (see Andersson and Boyer 1970, Christian 1976, Gaarder 1970, Ramírez and Castañeda 1974, Saville and Troike 1971, Ulibarri 1970, U.S. Commission on Civil Rights 1975).

Bilingual program directors also stress the importance of affective concerns. For example, Tilley (1982) found that Title VII program directors, when asked to rank the goals of bilingual instruction in order of importance, consistently placed at the head of the list a statement concerning the development and maintenance of self esteem.

In view of the prominence of affective factors in the bilingual literature, it is surprising to note how few studies of bilingual education in this country actually investigate non-cognitive variables. This situation is in marked contrast to the research on French language immersion programs in Canada which have examined a wide variety of personal identity and attitude variables (Lambert 1977, Swain and Lapkin 1981).

An exploratory review of the literature on affective factors in bilingual education (Baral 1980) revealed that research in this country has largely been restricted to one affective dimension, the self concept. The present paper expands the scope of the preliminary review by examining a larger data base of self concept studies in bilingual education and by relating the findings in bilingual education to general studies of the self concept in the educational literature. The paper is both a review of existing self concept research and an examination of alternative theoretical frameworks which can be used to interpret the findings of these studies.

PARADIGMS FOR SELF CONCEPT RESEARCH

The traditional paradigm for research on the self concept involves the use of this construct as an intervening variable, influenced on the one hand by antecedent factors such as child rearing practices or group membership, and influencing in turn the process of academic success or failure (Shavelson et al 1976, Scheirer and Kraut 1979).

The compensatory education literature

The view of the self concept as an intervening variable, determined largely by factors outside the school but influencing academic achievement, is strongly reflected in the literature of the compensatory education movement. Commenting on this literature, Soars and Soars (1969, p. 32) summarized the rationale which existed in the 1960's to explain the low self concept of black children:

> culturally disadvantaged children... seem to mirror the negative attitudes of others and reflect discrimination in their own negative self images. Handicapped by poverty and grossly unstimulating conditions, they are characterized by a denigration of ones' potential as a person and as a learner...

The literature of the compensatory education movement is filled with exhortations concerning the need to enhance the self concepts of "disadvantaged children," based on the assumption that poor children must have a diminished self image (see Fantini and Weinstein 1968, Gordon and Wilkerson 1966, Wity 1967). Reflecting the prevailing rhetoric of the period, Zirkel (1971, P. 211) concluded that the schools "have a fundamental responsibility to enhance the self concepts of their students."

Self concept and academic achievement

During the 1950's and 1960's a number of studies showed that, in general, self concept scores were positively related to student achievement (Jersild 1952, Reeder 1955, Stevens 1956, Brookover et al 1966). Several studies also demons-

trated the same relationship among Mexican American students (Anderson and Johnson 1968, D. Rogers 1972, Evans and Anderson 1973, Baral 1977). However, interpretation of these studies has always been complicated by the possible confounding effects of ethnicity and socio-economic status (Linton 1970).

More recent research has begun to question the existence of a straightforward relationship between the self concept and academic achievement. It has been shown that black students can have high self concept scores and low achievement scores (Soars and Soars 1969, Powers et al 1971), that intervention programs can lead to an enhanced self concept or to increased academic achievement, but not both at the same time (Scheirer and Kraut 1979), and that poor academic performance may have a stronger effect on the self regard of middle class children than lower class children (Smith et al 1978).

A recent meta analysis of over 100 studies concluded that, given the diversity of the literature, it is possible to find some support for any viewpoint including the possibility that "the true relationship between measures of self and performance/achievement is zero" (Hansford and Hattie 1982, p. 127).

Faced with conflicting findings of self concept studies, reviewers have traditionally argued that the problem lies with faulty instrumentation and inadequate construct validation (see Wylie 1974 and Shavelson et al 1976). While these explanations are entirely plausible, other researchers have argued that the traditional paradigm itself needs modification.

Alternative paradigms for self concept research

Three basic models have been suggested as alternatives to the traditional view of the self concept as an intervening variable. Some authors have proposed that the self concept influences achievement only indirectly through its impact on other behavioral or personality variables. Thus, Blattstein et al (1978) argue that coping skills are influenced by the self concept and that these skills are more directly related to student achievement. In a similar fashion, Thomas (1980, p. 227) proposes that "causal attributions... act as a moderating variable between characteristics of students... and experiences of success and failure in school."

In contrast to these theories of indirect influence, Felice (1978) proposes a new model of parallel influence: Both the self concept and the students' perceptions of social power are hypothesized to exercise independent influences on achievement.

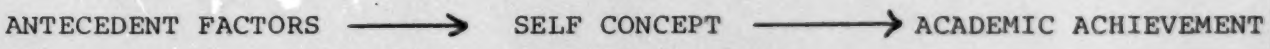
Kifer (1975) and Scheirer and Kraut (1979) argue for a more fundamental inversion of the research paradigm. They conclude that self concept enhancement is more likely to be an outcome variable which results from high achievement than an intervening variable which is necessary for achievement to occur. Evidence in support of this model is found in the studies of Calsyn (1974), Bridgeman and Shipman (1978) and Kifer (1975).

The four alternative paradigms for self concept research are presented in Figure I. Up to the present time, most research--including studies in bilingual education--has been conducted under the traditional paradigm. However, the low level of covariation between measures of self concept and academic achievement found in the meta-analysis of Hansford and Hattie (1982) suggests that alternative models of self concept influence need to be explored.

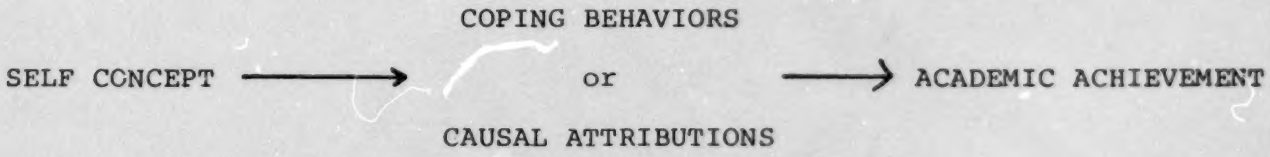
Figure 1

PARADIGMS FOR SELF CONCEPT RESEARCH

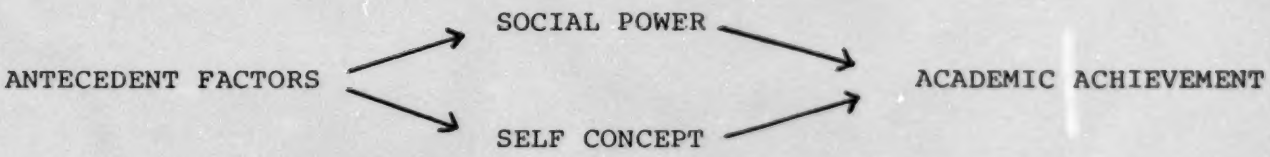
1. Self concept as an intervening variable (Shavelson et al 1976)



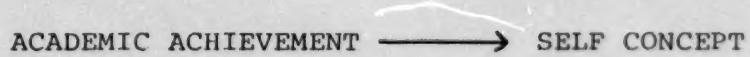
2. Indirect influence of the self concept (Blattstein et al 1978, Thomas 1980)



3. Parallel influence of the self concept (Felice 1978)



4. Self concept as an outcome variable (Kifer 1975, Scheirer and Kraut 1979)



SELF CONCEPT RESEARCH IN BILINGUAL EDUCATION

The early literature of the bilingual education movement stressed the negative impact of social factors on the affective development of language minority students. For example, Saville and Troike (1971) suggested that negative stereotypes about the students' ethnic group may adversely affect the self image, and Hernández (1967, p. 60) concluded that:

> Many Mexican-American students are aware of the stigma of second-class citizenship. Early in their development, they have realized the role assigned to them by many members of the Anglo-American society, and feeling the discrimination, have reacted with a mechanism many behavioral scientists call ethnic self-hatred.

In addition to social factors, the bilingual education literature also stressed the impact of school practices on the development of the language minority child's self concept. Thus Gaarder (1970) argued that the rejection of the mother tongue seriously affects the self image of the child, the Civil Rights Study (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights 1975) pointed out that the traditional ethnocentricity of the school weakens the sense of pride of language minority students, and Christian (1976) contended that the initial literacy in a second language implies a shift in identity which can have negative psychological consequences.

Gaarder's position on this issue summarizes several of the important points found in the bilingual education literature.

> Language is the most important exteriorization or manifestation of the self, of the human personality. If the school, the all-powerful school, rejects the mother tongue of an entire group of children, it can be expected to affect seriously and adversely those children's concept of their parents, their homes, and of themselves. (Gaarder 1970, p. 50)

Bilingual education, then, is seen as a vehicle for reversing the negative influences of these factors on the child's sense of identity. Recognition of the child's culture will lead to more positive attitudes toward school (Saville and Troike 1971) and will strengthen the sense of collective pride of language minority children (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights 1975). Improved academic performance will ultimately result "from enhancing self-esteem through inclusion of Hispanic culture and Spanish in the curriculum" (Ramírez and Castañeda 1974, p. 103).

The instrumental use of self concept enhancement to improve academic achievement - a major theme in the early literature on bilingual education - is also reflected in the goals and objectives of bilingual programs, as documented in an earlier review (Baral 1980). Examining the goals and objectives of these projects, one notes a basic assumption, explicitly stated in some cases but more often inferred from the project documents, that bilingual students have poor self concepts, lack pride in their cultural heritage, and are ashamed of their home language (Baral 1980).

In summary, the writings of the compensatory education movement and the early literature on bilingual education share the same conceptualization of the self concept as an intervening variable which influences student achievement.

Self concept studies

Although the importance of self concept enhancement is often mentioned in the general literature on bilingual education and bilingual program descriptions typically contain specific goals concerning self concept improvement (Baral 1980), the amount of empirical data on the affective development of students in bilingual programs is somewhat limited. An earlier review (Baral 1980), while finding some support for the hypothesis that bilingual programs have a positive effect on the affective development of participating students, cautioned that any firm conclusions in this respect were premature because of the nature of the evidence presently available. The program evaluation documents on which this review was based reported very unsophisticated methods of self concept assessment (see Baral 1980).

The data base for the present paper included both program evaluation documents and other research in the ERIC system and findings of doctoral dissertations which generally reported more adequate assessment and analysis techniques.

Two types of studies were found in the search: (a) impact studies which examined the effects of bilingual programs on the development of the self concept, and (b) com-

parative studies which tested the hypothesis that bilingual programs are more successful than monolingual programs in enhancing the students' self image. A total of 40 studies were located which addressed these two questions.

Program impact studies

Eight studies reported the impact of bilingual programs on participating students without any comparative data on other students not enrolled in the programs. Typically these studies examined pre/post gains in self concept over a single year. With one exception (Velásquez 1974), the impact studies were program evaluation reports found in the ERIC system. Although some findings were reported for all levels, pre-school through secondary, the majority of the studies were conducted at the elementary level.

A tabulation of the findings from these studies is presented in Table I. Since several studies covered multiple grade levels, the number of findings is greater than the number of studies. A positive finding indicates statistically significant growth in self concept during the year.

One general trend is evident in these studies: Findings of a positive impact on self concept development are more consistent in the lower grades. At the primary level (grades 1-3) most studies found some positive program effects,

TABLE I

Impact Studies Showing
Pre/Post Differences in
Self Concept Scores

Level	Positive Findings	No Impact	Studies
Pre school	3	-	Askins 1975, 1976; Velásquez 1974
Primary level (1-3)	11	6	Askins 1976; Ligon 1974; Harrison 1975, 1976a, 1976b; Velásquez 1974
Elementary level (4-6)	3	8	Ligon 1974; Harrison 1975, 1976a, 1976b; Santos 1979
Secondary level (7-12)	6	-	Velásquez 1974

but at the elementary level (grades 4-6) pre/post differences in self concept, if observed, tended to be non-significant. Since only one study reported findings from the secondary level, no interpretation of the results for this level seems justified.

Comparative studies

A larger group of studies (32) reported comparative data on the self concept development of language minority children in bilingual and monolingual programs. The majority of these studies were doctoral dissertations. As in the previous group of studies, some findings were reported at all grade levels, but most studies were conducted in the elementary grades. The results of these studies are presented in Table II.

The hypothesis that bilingual programs are more successful than monolingual programs in raising the self concepts of language minority students is most strongly supported at the primary level. However, the overall pattern of results shows a predominance of studies finding no significant differences between groups. Very few studies found that monolingual instruction was superior to bilingual instruction in increasing self esteem.

TABLE II

Bilingual vs Monolingual Instruction

Self Concept Comparisons

Level	Positive Findings	No Differences	Negative Findings	Studies
Kindergarten	1	4	1	Córdova 1970; Cohen 1971; Owens 1971; Aguayo 1977; J. López 1980
Primary Level	18	19	7	Córdova 1970; Owens 1971; Skoczylas 1973; Educ. Service Center 1971; Zirkel 1972; Young 1972; McCracken 1973; Milwaukee Public Schools 1974, 1976; Lampman 1973; Harkins 1973; Albright 1974; Flouris 1978; Gardiner 1973; M. López 1973; J. López 1980; Peterson 1978; Rivera 1973; J. Rogers 1973; Samuels and Griffore 1979; Seligson 1981
Elementary Level	2	14	4	Owens 1971; McCracken 1973; Milwaukee Public Schools 1974; Offenberg 1974; Albright 1974; Alvino 1980; Flouris 1978; García 1977; Peters 1979; Post 1979; Rivera 1973
Secondary Level	5	7	-	Alvino 1980; Curiel 1979; Del Buono 1971; Powers 1978; Prewitt Diaz 1981

Conclusions and discussion

The studies of the self concept in bilingual education reviewed above have addressed two basic issues: Do bilingual programs have an impact on self concept development, and is that impact superior to the influence of monolingual programs?

Given the limited nature of the evidence in these studies, a conclusive answer to either question is not possible. However, some general observations do seem justified by the present data. First, the most consistent effects of bilingual instruction on self concept development appear to be found in the lower grades. Second, bilingual programs - when compared to monolingual programs - are more likely to be superior in promoting self esteem at the primary level than in the upper grades. Finally, there is little evidence from any grade level to suggest that monolingual programs are more successful in promoting a healthy self image among bilingual children.

Even though the two initial questions cannot be fully answered, we may ask whether they were the right questions to be investigated in the first place. To raise this issue is to question the prevailing paradigm which has guided self concept research in bilingual education.

It was argued above that self concept investigations in bilingual education have been strongly influenced by the

traditional paradigm of self concept research. This model treats the self concept as an intervening variable which, on the one hand, is influenced by antecedent factors largely outside the control of the school, and, on the other, is strongly related to success or failure in school. The traditional paradigm figures prominently in the literature of the compensatory education movement.

When applied to the case of language minority children, the traditional paradigm has been modified somewhat. The early literature of the bilingual education movement stressed the impact of such antecedent factors as prejudice and discrimination on the development of the bilingual child's sense of identity. But this literature also argued that school related factors, such as the rejection of the child's home language, have a negative influence on the self esteem of language minority children. Bilingual education, then, has been conceptualized as a means for enhancing the self concept of language minority children, a process which would ultimately produce higher academic achievement.

The application of this rationale, coupled with growing demands for accountability of school programs in general and the rising tide of criticism against bilingual education in particular, has lead to the selection of the general research question: Is bilingual education more effective than monolingual education in promoting affective development?

It seems unlikely that this question can ever be fully answered, given the wide variety of instructional approaches which fall under the general rubric of bilingual education and the many ecological variables which impact on the operation of bilingual programs. The studies reviewed above, although providing little if any support for the superiority of monolingual instruction, often report no significant differences between bilingual and monolingual programs.

In the long run, it may be far more productive to examine the process of self concept formation in successful bilingual programs than to continue to ask whether bilingual education is, in general, more effective in promoting self esteem.

We do know that some bilingual programs have been extremely successful in raising the academic achievement levels of participating students, and that the effects appear to be cumulative, if students remain in the program (see Leyba 1978, Rosier and Holm 1980). However, we have very little longitudinal data on the development of the students' self concept in these programs.

We also know that many children do not stay continuously in bilingual programs for several years. The AIR report, for example, found that fifth and sixth grade

students in Title VII Projects had experienced bilingual instruction for 3.1 and 3.2 years, respectively (AIR 1978). The affective consequences of movement in and out of a bilingual program or of early exit from the program is another important area for future research.

In conclusion, I would argue that we should accept, as a working hypothesis for research in bilingual education, the view that self concept development is primarily a result of what happens in school, rather than an antecedent factor necessary for academic achievement. Acceptance of this view may help us to move away from the compensatory model of bilingual education, and to focus on the affective impact of bilingual programs which are successful in raising academic achievement.

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